

# NERO

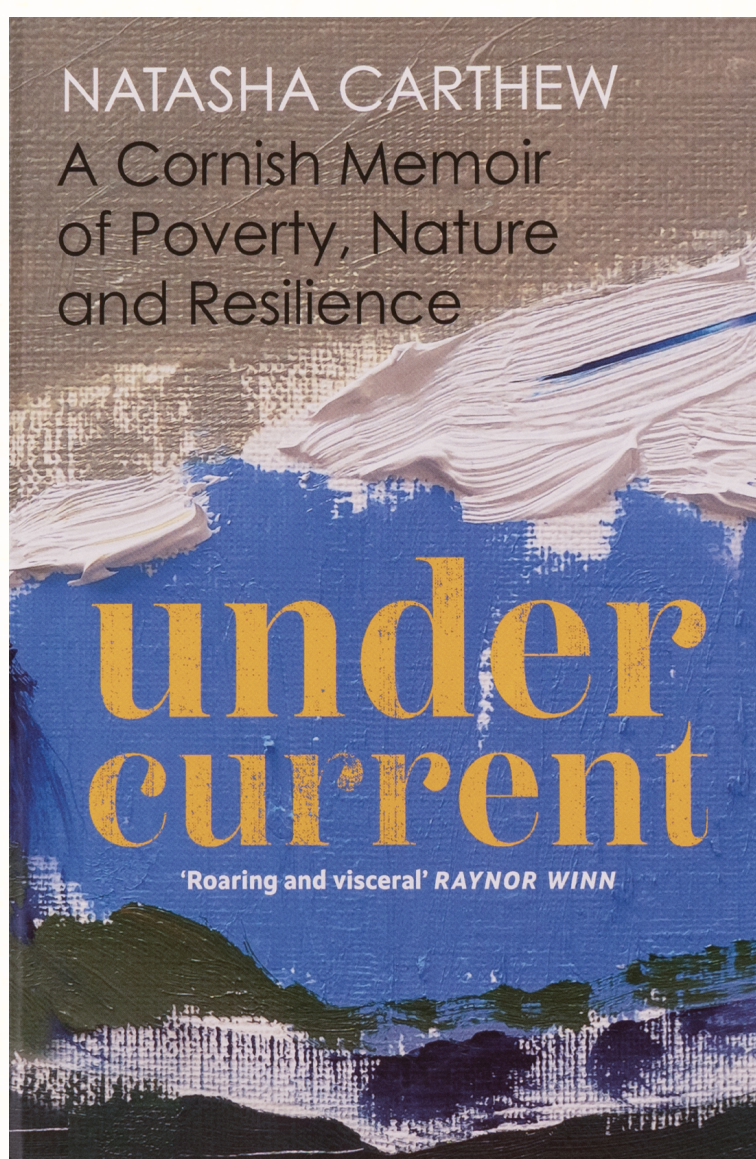
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## BOOK AWARDS

### Reading Guides

#### Non-Fiction Shortlist

#### *Undercurrent* by Natasha Carthew



**Natasha Carthew** is a working-class writer living in Cornwall. She has written all her eight books outside, either in the fields and woodland that surround her home or in the cabin that she built from scrap wood. She is the Founder and Artistic Director of The Working Class Writers Festival and The Nature Writing Prize for Working Class Writers. Natasha is known for writing on socioeconomic issues and working-class representation in literature for several publications, podcasts and programmes; including ITV, BBC Radio 4, *The Bookseller*, *Guardian*, and *The Economist*. She is a recipient of The Bookseller Rising Star Award 2022.

*'With a saltwater sting and taut freshness, Undercurrent is brilliant, bold and beautifully written and brings us right into Natasha's life and love of nature.'* - **Non-Fiction judges, 2023 Nero Book Awards**

*'Wild writing for me has been the difference between success and failure, the change between truly opening my mind and heart to the ether as opposed to sitting and staring at a screen, wondering 'how I felt' when I could have been out in the elements, just feeling.'*

In *Undercurrent*, Natasha Carthew reflects on her childhood and adolescence in Cornwall, simultaneously home to some of the poorest and richest communities in the United Kingdom. Carthew was born and raised in a small coastal town where second homes - visited by their owners once or twice a year - sit alongside council estates, and the social divisions found across Britain today are starkly evident. Carthew's family home was on one of those estates, where the security afforded by their council house allowed her to plot a life other than rural poverty for herself, and pursue her ambition of becoming a writer.

Divided into four sections, each one named for one of the elements, *Undercurrent* combines nature writing with social analysis, the personal with the political. The result is a poetic memoir in which Carthew's descriptions of her coastal environment are interwoven with the author's adolescent recollections of her search for creative escape, and a sense of

belonging as she develops her identity as a young, gay woman.

The Cornish coast has inspired writers for centuries, but Carthew vividly brings this landscape alive anew, reminding readers of the hope that we can all draw from immersing ourselves in the natural world.

#### Discussion points:

- Natasha Carthew describes herself as an ethnic minority. Has reading *Undercurrent* made you think differently about your own identity and how we classify (or don't) ethnicity in the UK?
- Having read *Undercurrent*, do you think that strict rules should govern who can own property in Cornwall and other parts of the UK with extreme inequality, or would this just mean that everyone else would miss out on experiencing the beauty of Cornwall for themselves?
- To what extent do you agree that *Undercurrent* is best described as nature writing?